

17 March 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: CIA Member, IHC

SUBJECT : COINS Experiment

REFERENCE : NSA Memorandum #N0192, 2 March 1970

1. The overall recommendation that the COINS experiment be continued for two additional years and evaluation by the IHC be postponed accordingly, is difficult to argue with. There is virtually nothing as yet to evaluate. However, if they don't get at the real problem of utility there won't be anything to evaluate in two years either.

2. Comments on the specific recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation No. 1

This would appear to be strictly a security matter and presumably will be decided on security grounds. Paragraph 2 is not consistent with the latest OCS thinking which is to put COINS on an IBM 360-65.

Recommendation No. 2

That each agency should plan, program, and budget for the 2 year extension seems obvious enough. Why, however, suggest the cumbersome budgeting technique of prorating the cost of the DIA store and forward switch. Wouldn't it be more efficient for one agency to budget for the machine?

Recommendation No. 3

This recommendation is really the heart of the whole COINS problem. Nobody seriously considers that the technical problems cannot, almost routinely, be overcome. The real COINS problem is whether or not there are files for which community-wide, on-line manipulation would be truly useful. If there are (in sufficient quantity), then COINS will be worthwhile.

If there are not, the most brilliant technical solutions will not magically create a useful system. While we do not object to the proposal by the Chairman, IHC that the System Design and Development Subcommittee identify information and topics which would be useful in a community information handling system, we feel that, at least for Agency requirements, Project ASPIN would be in a better position to make such an evaluation.

Recommendation No. 4

Until it can be demonstrated to intelligence analysts that useful files exist on the other end of the wire, they are not going to want to spend much time learning to use the system (unless of course you employ bigger whips). A favorable finding in Recommendation No. 3 would almost surely automatically take care of the problem of arousing analyst interest.


DD/I Information Processing Coordinator

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